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ABSTRACT

A Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) may be comprised of one or more counties, can cross state lines, and must contain a city or urbanized area of 50,000 or more people. The population of the whole county (or counties) is included in the MSA even if part of the county is rural. A Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) must have over one million population and contain at least one Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area. Since 1980, metropolitan area growth has been faster than growth in nonmetropolitan areas. Metropolitan Statistical Areas show slow or declining growth in the northeast and midwest and more rapid growth in the south and west. Ninety-five of the 100 fastest-growing MSAs are located in the south and west. Eighteen CMSAs had over two million people in 1986; nine were located in the northeast and midwest regions and nine were in the south and west regions. Nearly one-half (48 percent) of the U.S. population lives in metropolitan areas of more than one million. Suburban areas are no longer dependent on central cities for jobs, because corporations have begun moving to the suburbs. The subsequent build-up of shopping malls and other service centers has increased the economic split between central cities and their suburbs. Resources and strategies for teaching about population are included in this issue. (SM)

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WHERE IS THE METROPOLITAN U.S.?

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Where is the Metropolitan U.S.?

About 75 percent of the U.S. population reside in urban areas. Coincidentally, about 75 percent of the U.S. population reside in metropolitan areas. However, it is possible for a person to live in an area which is urban but not metropolitan. And it is also possible to reside in a rural area that is metropolitan. The **Metropolitan U.S. Data Sheet,** published this month, gives the figures for population size, change, and other demographic variables for the metropolitan areas in the U.S. This essay examines the current trends of growth of metropolitan areas. However, for a better understanding of the **Data Sheet** figures and discussion of the current trends, it is first necessary to wade through the definition of a metropolitan area. This will help to explain where the metropolitan areas of the United States are and exactly what being "metropolitan" means.

Kimberly Crews

Both of the above environments are included in a Metropolitan Statistical Area, as defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census.

What is a Metropolitan Area?

A metropolitan area is essentially a big city and its independent suburbs, defined by using counties as building blocks. Since whole counties are included or excluded, there may well be parts of those counties which are rural in character.

The U.S. Bureau of the Census defines a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) as a county containing a city of 50,000 or more population, using legal boundaries to define the city. However, because cities often sprawl beyond their actual boundaries, a county containing an Urbanized Area (UA) of 50,000 or more population and where the total metropolitan area is 100,000 or greater can also be classified as an MSA. (The distinction between an Urbanized Area and a city is made because some cities have legal boundaries which are quite small compared to their actual built-up area. The UA includes the city proper and the continuously built-up area around it and disregards other boundaries.) An MSA can be as small as a county, but can also be made up of several counties. As the map on the next page shows, the Lansing-East Lansing MSA in Michigan is made up of three counties.

In the case where one MSA happens to be near a larger MSA, but is socially and economically independent, the two (or more) MSAs are combined and called a Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA). A CMSA must contain 1 million or more population **and** contain a qualifying Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (PMSA) within it. A Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area is always part of a CMSA.

A county or group of counties may qualify as a PMSA if local opinion supports separate recognition of a county or group of counties demonstrating a relatively independent existence within the metro complex **or** if the area had

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been recognized as a metro area as of January 1, 1980. So a PMSA could possibly be a metro area in its own right had it not been part of the CMSA. The Detroit-Ann Arbor CMSA shown above is an example of a CMSA with two PMSAs – Detroit and Ann Arbor. All together, this CMSA is made up of eight counties. Detroit is the central city in this CMSA and the other counties (excluding Washtenaw where Ann Arbor is located) are economically dependent upon Detroit.

A CMSA is the largest kind of Metropolitan Statistical Area. However, the definition of metros is further classified from Level A, areas of 1 million or more, to Level D, areas of less than 100,000. This hierarchy allows one to make the distinction between large metro areas such as the New York CMSA with 17.9 million people and the Enid, Oklahoma MSA with 62,900.

To repeat a few key points, a Metropolitan Statistical Area may be comprised of one or more counties, can cross state lines, and must contain a city or Urbanized Area of 50,000 or more (with certain restrictions). The population of the whole county (or counties) is included in the MSA even if part of the county is rural. A Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area must have over 1 million population and contain at least one Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area. The definitions of MSAs contain additional restrictions, clarifications, and special cases which can be found in the Census Bureau documentation (see sources below).

Current Trends in Metropolitan Growth

Since 1980, metropolitan area growth has been faster than growth in nonmetropolitan areas. The reverse was true in the 1970s. Metropolitan area growth trends follow the overall U.S. growth patterns: slow or declining growth in the Northeast and Midwest and more rapid growth in the South and West. All 50 of the fastest-growing MSAs in the 1980s are located in the South and West. Ninety-five of the 100 fastest-growing MSAs are located in the South and West.

Eighteen CMSAs had over 2 million people in 1986. Nine are located in the Northeast and Midwest regions and nine in the South and West regions. While eight of the nine in the Northeast and Midwest regions grew less than 1 percent annually or lost population between 1980 and 1986, eight of the large CMSAs of the South and West experienced gains of over 1.5 percent.

Nearly half (48 percent) of the U.S. population live in metropolitan areas of more than 1 million population. However, smaller MSAs are growing more rapidly (in terms of percentage change) than the large metro areas. Within MSAs suburban area growth is increasing more rapidly than central city growth, although the rate of suburban growth has slowed since the 1970s. Suburban growth has made a great impact on patterns of life in metropolitan areas.

Suburban areas are no longer as dependent on central cities for jobs or to meet other economic needs. Because of improvements in communication and transportation, corporations, particularly those which depend on a white collar labor force, have been able to move to suburban areas. The subsequent build-up of shopping malls and other service centers has increased the economic split between central cities and their suburbs.

In the past, the majority of suburban towns really were "dormitory communities"; the labor force commuted to the central city. Now the bulk of the traffic in many metropolitan areas moves within suburbs or between suburbs; there are even some flows from central city to suburb. Many suburbanites never venture into the central city.

Because the roads in suburban areas were not built to accommodate this traffic load, growth has often resulted in severe traffic congestion. Today it is not unusual to find a traffic jam 20 miles away from the central city. Another outcome of the movement of corporations is that service sector and/or "blue-collar" jobs previously offered to lower-income residents of central cities often disappear. It is not uncommon to find a high unemployment rate among inner-city minority youth, while low-paying, generally service-sector jobs in suburban areas remain unfilled.

Fastest and Slowest Growing Metropolitan Statistical Areas 1980-1986

10 MSAs with Greatest Gains	Percent	10 MSAs with Greatest Losses	Percent
1. Naples, FL	41.2	1. Duluth, MN-WI	−8.7
2. Ocala, FL	39.6	2. Elmira, NY	−7.3
3. Fort Myers-Cape Coral, FL	36.0	3. Peoria, IL	−7.0
3. Fort Pierce, FL	36.0	4. Waterloo-Cedar Falls, IA	−6.9
5. Amarillo, TX	35.3	5. Muncie, IN	−6.0
6. Anchorage, AK	34.7	6. Beaver County, PA	−5.5
6. Midland, TX	34.7	6. Parkersburg-Marietta, WV-OH	−5.5
8. Melbourne-Titusville-Palm Bay, FL	32.3	8. Wheeling, WV-OH	−5.4
9. West Palm Beach-Boca Raton-Delray Beach, FL	31.0	9. Cumberland, MD-WV	−5.2
10. McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX	29.1	10. Buffalo, NY	−5.0

In the future, metropolitan areas will probably continue to expand, particularly in the South and West, stretching further away from the original central cities and gobbling up additional counties. With continued suburban growth, more metropolitan areas will develop multiple business districts as corporate expansion reduces dependence on the central cities. As this expansion continues, it may become impossible to distinguish one metropolitan area from another.

Will this evolution cause the definition of "metropolitan" to become less meaningful? At present many metropolitan areas contain a large amount of farmland. Are other nonmetropolitan areas likely to be classified as metropolitan given the fact that much rural territory is already included in the metropolitan classification? And if many more nonmetropolitan areas do become metropolitan, will the significance of this "metropolitan" label be diminished? Where would one metropolitan area end and another begin?

References

Haub, Carl. "The Last Metro (Definition)?" *Population Today*, Population Reference Bureau, November 1985.

U.S Bureau of the Census, *1980 Census of Population*, Supplementary Report, "Metropolitan Statistical Areas," PC80-S1-18, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C.

Discussion Questions

1. Is the county in which you reside a single-county metropolitan area, part of a multi-county metropolitan area, or a nonmetropolitan area? If you live in a metropolitan area complete the remaining questions in this section.
2. Determine the type of metropolitan area in which you reside (CMSA, PMSA, or MSA).
3. Use the **Metropolitan Data Sheet** to determine the population of your metropolitan area.
4. Find out how much of the population in your metropolitan area resides in the central city or urbanized area which allows it to be classified as metropolitan.
5. Do you live in the central city or outside of the central city?
6. Have the suburban areas in your metropolitan area become home to more businesses? If so, why? How has the influx of businesses affected traffic patterns, shopping, congestion, and job availability? Has the increased development changed commuting times (rush-hour and non-rush-hour trips)?
7. Comment on how increased development in suburban areas has affected the central city in terms of traffic patterns, businesses, tourism, shopping, and employment opportunities.

Take a Survey

Determine the commuting patterns of the families in your school by finding out where families live and work. Students can take home a questionnaire for their parents. Combine the responses and analyze the commuting patterns for your community.

OR

Students can take a random survey within the community, perhaps at a shopping center. Where do people live and work (suburb, central city, nonmetropolitan area)? Do the trends in the group surveyed follow U.S. trends? If not, try to explain the reason for any deviations.

Using the U.S. Metropolitan Data Sheet

1. Select four Metropolitan Statistical Areas that are similar in population size, one from each geographic region (e.g. Buffalo, NY; Columbus, OH; New Orleans, LA; and Portland-Vancouver, OR-WA). Compare the growth rates, minority population (black and Hispanic), and two other variables of interest to you.
2. Do the rates of growth for the individual regions follow the patterns described in the above essay? What do you think accounts for any similarities, differences, or deviations from the U.S. trends?
3. What accounts for any similarities or differences in the variables between the metropolitan areas that you have selected?
4. Compare the same variables as in #1 for several metropolitan areas within your state (or region if your state has only a few metropolitan areas). What do you think accounts for any similarities, differences, or deviations from the U.S. trends?

RESOURCES

Metropolitan Resources

State and Metropolitan Area Data Book, 1986, by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1986. U.S. Goverment Printing Office. Washington, D.C.

A wide variety of information on the States and metropolitan areas in the United States. The data presented come from nearly 50 federal and private agencies.

Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1987 (107th Edition), by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1986. U.S. Government Printing Office. Washington, D.C.

Published since 1878, this abstract contains a summary of statistics on the social, political, and economic organization of the U.S. Convenient for statistical reference and as a guide to other statistical publications and sources.

United States Metropolitan Data Sheet, by Carl Haub and Machiko Yanagishita. 1987. Population Reference Bureau, 777 14th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. Wall Chart, $2.00 plus $1.00 shipping/handling.

An 18½" × 24" wall chart with 11 columns of population data for the metropolitan areas in the United States.

Audiovisual Resources

U.S. Cities (Growth and Development), 1984. 16 minutes, 16mm or VHS. Encyclopaedia Britannica Educational Corporation, 425 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60611. Includes a viewer's guide. **16mm $440, VHS $350.**

This film traces the growth of U.S. cities from the towns and cities of colonial times to the megalopoli of today. It shows the relationship of city growth to the development of transportation, technology, and commerce.

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The Business of Hunger. 1986. 28 minutes. ½" **VHS.**

This film challenges the traditional assumptions about hunger by suggesting that enough food is grown on earth to feed its entire population, and that agribusiness practices are one of the causes of hunger. It describes how peasants lose their land to multinational corporations that make huge profits by replacing food crops with cash crops. Related issues such as migration to cities are also touched upon.

Child Survival: The Silent Emergency. 1985. 58 minutes. ½" **VHS.**

This moving film tracks the progress of the Child Survival Revolution led by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The Revolution, launched in late 1982, uses the following strategies to combat child mortality: growth monitoring, oral rehydration, breastfeeding education, and immunization. The presentation does an excellent job of showing the relationship between child mortality and overall world population growth and the importance of the status of women as a factor in the health of a society.

Population Change and Economic Development. 1987. 25 minutes. ¾" **U-matic & ½" VHS.**

Based on the World Bank's 1987 report, *Population Change and Economic Development*, this film makes very clear the connections between these two processes. The film opens with a graphic display of the historical growth of world population and projections for the future. It explains the rapid growth being experienced in developing countries, and why such rapid growth is a great burden for these countries. It also discusses official population policies and their place in the extremely personal realm of family planning.

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